

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, today joined Rep. Anh “Joseph” Cao (R-LA), Rep. Iliana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), and Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA) in introducing H.R. 6433, the Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act. The same bill was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS), Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), and Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC).

The Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act would impose sanctions on individuals who perpetrate or are complicit in human rights abuses committed against nationals of Vietnam or their family members. Individuals who warrant sanctions would be disqualified from applying for a U.S. visa or taking part in financial or property transactions in the U.S., among other penalties.

“For years, Congress has expressed concern regarding Vietnam’s ongoing disregard for the basic civil and political liberties of its people,” said Rep. Sanchez. “These statements have undoubtedly raised public awareness of Vietnam’s egregious human rights abuses. But more must be done if we expect Vietnam to take concrete action on this issue. By making improvements in human rights a condition of continued diplomatic relations with Vietnam, I believe the Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act will create positive change for the people of Vietnam.”

In a prepared statement, the co-sponsors said: “It is important that the United States government publicly condemn the arrests, detentions, and acts of violence that contradict Vietnam’s own commitment to internationally accepted standards of human rights and the rule of law. Unfortunately, Vietnam’s oppression of its citizens, particularly over the last year, continues to demonstrate that public statements of concern are simply not enough and more targeted action is needed. This legislation seeks to remedy this atrocious situation. The Vietnamese government must understand that Vietnamese-American relations will not normalize until Vietnam reverses its course on its human rights record. We will continue to signal to the U.S. Administration and the government of Vietnam that we will not waiver in this pursuit.”

The Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act was brought about in response to Vietnam’s ongoing suppression of basic human rights. Individuals who express criticism of the Vietnamese government are subject to harassment and, potentially, detention or arrest. Lawyers, journalists, bloggers, democracy and human rights activists, independent trade union leaders, non-state-sanctioned publishers, and members of ethnic and religious minorities are frequent recipients of intimidation and abuse. Vietnam is also a significant source country for commercial

sexual exploitation and forced labor. In 2010, the State Department downgraded Vietnam from “Tier 2” to “Tier 2 Watch List” in its 10th annual Trafficking in Persons Report because the country had not been effective in identifying or prosecuting human traffickers and protecting trafficking victims.